



**Southwestern Minnesota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.



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As people and congregations of our Southwestern Minnesota Synod, we stand together at a pivotal moment. Before us lie many opportunities to equip God's people to steward the Good News in our swiftly changing mission field.

At our 2016 Synod Assembly, we launched a groundbreaking initiative for the people and congregations of our synod. Entitled Embrace God's Mission + Equip God's People, this initiative will produce much needed resources to empower lay people, pastors, and congregations throughout our synod to:

- deepen congregational vitality;
- enhance local and global mission; and
- develop servant leaders.

A lead gift of \$500,000 for this important funding initiative has come from Lilly Endowment, Inc., a national foundation supporting efforts to revitalize churches and denominations in America. As a part of this Lilly grant, the people of our synod have been called to raise \$250,000 in matching funds as soon as feasible to establish the ongoing Ministerial Excellence Fund, a fund that will provide critical resources to help reduce burdensome educational debts of our new pastors, meet difficult medical emergencies of clergy, and provide greater pension equity as our pastors prepare for retirement.

The Lilly grant is just the beginning of the overall funding initiative that will equip our lay people and clergy and give new life and leadership to our congregations. Congregations and individuals will have special opportunities to make financial commitments to bring success to this effort. At the assembly it was announced that a number of pledges and gifts have already been made by people and organizations in our synod in response to this opportunity.

You will learn more about each of the priority areas in the coming weeks. Working, serving, organizing, praying, and giving together, we can build an exciting mission-inspired future for all of our congregations.

We are called by our Lord to move forward with hope and great expectations.

**Synod is us doing church together.**

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